

SHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 1882

SUICIDE OF C. VANDERBILT. Particulars of His Life.

The New York Sun gives the following particulars of the career of Cornelius J. Vanderbilt, brother of Wm. J. Vanderbilt, who shot himself Sunday:

Cornelius J. Vanderbilt's peculiar figure was well-known to most New Yorkers. He was tall, very slender and bent from weakness and habitual stooping. His face was very thin, and his features were sharp and irregular. He wore a beard and mustache, which were slightly gray, and of late he dressed very carefully and in costly clothing.

Coroner Brady had not returned to his home at an early hour this morning. E. O. Perrin said that the coroner desired all the witnesses to keep quiet and not talk about the case; that the coroner knew nothing of the details, and did not wish to know until the inquest; that the coroner could not say at present whether the death was a suicide or an accident.

A reporter called at the residence of Dr. Robert F. Weir, who expressed unwillingness to talk about Mr. Vanderbilt and his relations with him as family physician. He said he visited Mr. Vanderbilt on Saturday, but noticed nothing in his conduct to indicate temporary aberration. He had been treating Mr. Vanderbilt for epilepsy for several years. He was summoned to the Glenham hotel at 6 o'clock last evening, and found Mr. Vanderbilt dead. He believed him to be out of his mind when he shot himself. The Doctor refused to say anything further about the affair.

Cornelius Jeremiah Vanderbilt, as his father called him, or Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., as he insisted he should rightly be called, resenting the bestowal of that title upon his nephew, the eldest son of William H. Vanderbilt, was the third son of Commodore Vanderbilt, and the second who survived him. "Mother always told me," he once said, "that I was Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr." Born in 1830, he lived with his father till he was 18. He was afflicted almost from childhood with epilepsy. He did not get on well with his father, who in 1848 told him that he was not wanted any longer about the house, and would do well to find a boarding house. The Commodore allowed his son \$100 a month for his support at this time. An idle man, young Cornelius made some pretty doubtful acquaintances, and became a gambler with cards.

In 1849 his father sent him off to California before the mast in a three-masted schooner. He did not stay long with the Argonauts, and, returning, was ill for a while at his father's house, and then went to Washington. Here he drew a draft on the Commodore, which was dishonored, and presently he was arrested and sent to an insane asylum. He was taken out the next day on habeas corpus and released. Twice afterward he sojourned for brief periods in insane asylums, the last time at Northampton in 1865.

He was at one time a clerk in Clark & Rapallo's law office, and again in the house of Wm. B. Miller & Co., a Gold street leather firm. His allowance from his father remained at \$100 a month until his marriage, at 28 years of age, in 1856. Then his father bought for him a ten-acre fruit farm in West Hartford and increased his allowance to \$150 a month, and afterward, at the solicitation of his daughter-in-law, to \$200. The income from the farm was small, and young Vanderbilt was not an enthusiastic farmer. He lived at the rate of \$5,000 or \$6,000 a year. His wife gave him her jewelry to pawn, but this went a very little way, and he ran deeply into debt. Horace Greeley lent him a good deal of money, and very vigorously resented an intimation from the Commodore that he need not look to the Commodore for repayment. Cornelius at one time left his fruit trees to look after themselves, came to New York, and was superintendent of a bonded warehouse under Collector Bailey at \$175 a month. His gambling habits continued, though he used to say that he had never lost \$10,000 altogether by gambling. He went through bankruptcy. Horace Greeley sent him all his notes as a present, and he made new notes and sent them back. The amount of his liabilities was \$52,000. He justified his expenditure on the ground that he had a position to maintain, and that it was absurd that his father's son and namesake should be limited to two or three hundred a month. His house at West Hartford was always full of visitors. His wife died in March, 1872, and he came to this city, and has since lived here.

He was not received at his father's house during the Commodore's last illness in 1878-7, and the will left him only the income of \$200,000 in United States bonds. This was not satisfactory to him, or to his sister, Mrs. La Baul. The two joined in contesting the will before Surrogate Calvin, and Cornelius J. sued his brother in the supreme court for \$1,000,000. The will contest was one of the most bitter and protracted that ever took place in the surrogate court. Mr. Scott Lord and Judge Jeremiah S. Black were retained for the contestants, and Henry F. Clinton and ex-Judge Comstock were the counsel for William H. Vanderbilt to sustain the will. The contestants claimed that the Commodore was physically and mentally incapable of making a will. They called a cloud of witnesses to prove the Commodore's belief in spiritualism, his communication with the spirit world through J. V. Mausfield and other mediums, the number of spiritualists who were in the habit of calling upon him at his office, and his payment of money to them. The contestants produced also a volume of testimony to show undue influence on the part of William H. Vanderbilt against his brother and his efforts to procure his disinheritance.

Through all the trial the brothers and their sisters sat in court, and listening to the evidence that only intense bitterness of feeling could have made public. The proponents introduced a mass of testimony to show that the Commodore had been greatly displeased with his son Cornelius for his dissolute and extravagant habits; that he had paid his debts so often and so often threatened to disown and disinherit him that there was nothing remarkable in the provisions of the will; that Cornelius J. had shown himself so incompetent to manage his financial affairs that it was a mark of great good sense for the Commodore to put his allowance in the hands of his more prudent brother.

Finally the surrogate refused to hear any more witnesses for the contestants, and then Judge Black announced that the contestants closed their case. The decision of the surrogate sustained the will. After the admission to probate of the Commodore's will, there remained Cornelius J. Vanderbilt's suit in the supreme court against his brother William H. for \$1,000,000, which he claimed had been promised to him by his brother.

In April, 1879, it was announced that the suit had been withdrawn, and that William H. Vanderbilt had paid to his brother what common report said was a million of dollars. At the same time Mr. C. J. Vanderbilt invited Mr. Greeley's daughters, Mrs. Ida Greeley Smith and Miss Gabrielle Greeley, to meet him at the Coleman house, and paid to them the principal and interest of his debt to the estate of their father, which was \$61,000, exclusive of the \$10,000 paid to them by Commodore Vanderbilt a few months after Mr. Greeley's death.

At the same time Mr. Vanderbilt paid off other debts, amounting to \$15,000, and he had been engaged up to the time of his death in settling or litigating claims against him. He had visited Europe, and it is said was contemplating another visit.

Recently he purchased the ten-acre fruit farm at West Hartford, on which he had lived fifteen years with his wife, and he was building a fine house there, upon which his expenditure was in every way lavish. Since he came into his fortune, indeed, he has been apparently enjoying and making the most of his life, and has given rein to his tastes for handsomely entertaining his friends. Mention was made recently in the Sun of an exquisite dinner given by him at Pinard's Round Table, at which nothing that taste and art have contributed to the elegance of the modern dinner table was spared to contribute to the pleasure of host and guests.

Mr. Vanderbilt had maintained a residence in the Grand hotel, Broadway and 31st street, for the past year and a half, living there occasionally for as long as two months at a time. His rooms were a parlor and bed-room in an out-of-the-way part of the house. He received only intimate friends there. When any one called at the desk for him the name was sent to his room by a special usher, who rapped on the door just loud enough to be heard and no louder. The rap was not repeated. If it was not answered the porter returned to the desk saying that Mr. Vanderbilt was not in. When the rap was answered the porter was often kept waiting half an hour before Mr. Vanderbilt would look at the card, and second and third cards sent up, meanwhile, by the impatient caller get no further than the head of the stairs. The clerk said last night that he could not remember that anybody had been admitted to the room. Sometimes Mr. Vanderbilt came down the stairs. He was last at the hotel about two months ago, before a trip that he made to the south. The clerk said last night:

"We received notice some months ago to get his rooms ready, as he was coming to occupy them. Then Mr. Terry, his agent, sent word that he was not coming. Three weeks ago Mr. Terry came to me here and said: 'I want to see you privately.' I came from behind the desk, and went to a private room. Mr. Terry saw that the door was securely closed, and then said very earnestly, 'Promise me faithfully that you won't say anything.' He waited some moments, walked up and down the apartments, looked at me a moment, and said: 'Cornelius is at the Glenham. I don't want you to miff a single one of it to anybody. I understood from him that he did not want me to give the address. Previous to that time if anybody had asked for Mr. Vanderbilt we gave him his address as we have it.'"